

VZCZCXRO2748
PP RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHCO #0156 0720753
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 120753Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0232
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1243

UNCLAS COTONOU 000156

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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DEPT FOR AF/W (DBANKS)
PARIS FOR D'ELIA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BN](#)

SUBJECT: BENIN: GOB NEGOTIATES TO BRING TEACHERS BACK TO SCHOOL

REF: COTONOU (A) 00757; COTONOU (B) 00772; COTONOU (C) 00073

11. (U) SUMMARY. In a last attempt to save the school year, President Yayi met with the Front made up of representatives of the three teachers unions on February 21, and reiterated his commitment to satisfying their demands starting from July 1, 2008. The Front decided to resume school February 29, after having conducted outreach consultations throughout the country to inform teachers of its decision to resume work and to assure teachers' compliance. END SUMMARY

12. (U) At the February 21 meeting with the Front composed of representatives from the unions of the three levels of education (primary, secondary and University), President Yayi promised that he would sign decrees to implement the increase in the teachers' incentive allowance up to 25 percent of a teacher's salary and an increase in the housing allowance of up to 10 percent of a teacher's salary. He also pledged that he would set up a committee that would revise the scheme for contract workers in the public sector, so that teachers working under contracts could be recruited by the civil service. In addition to this, he promised that a joint committee would be created with a view to proposing a schedule for the implementation of measures to restore the prestige of the teaching profession including the indexation of teacher's wage and health insurance.

13. (U) At a meeting on February 28, 2008, the three teachers unions recalled all the commitments made by President Yayi and issued a statement urging teachers to go back to their classrooms February, 29, and asking them to join forces for the actual implementation of their recommendations. According to the Front, the decision to resume school stemmed from the fact that President Yayi has committed to all the decrees required to fulfill his promises and has transmitted them to the Front. However, they warned the government against any delay in the fulfillment of its obligations and threatened it with reprisals in case this occurs.

14. BEGIN NOTE: In the next 14 days, Benin would have been forced to declare the loss of a full school year, for lack of enough remaining days of active teaching. END NOTE

COMMENT: (SBU) The personal involvement of the president in the negotiations with teachers contributed a great deal to solving the crisis. President Yayi turned what appeared to be a test of wills between the government and teachers to good account by demonstrating his negotiation skills. Students and parents were becoming tired of the strike which could have led to a lost year if it had lasted 2 weeks longer. However, teachers could go back on strike if the government does not meet its commitments by July 1, 2008. END COMMENT

BROWN